

Power-House and Training School

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POWER-HOUSE AND TRAINING SCHOOL

BY EMORY H. ENGLISH

More than through the laws it enacts, the appropriations it makes and the executive appointments it approves, a session of an Iowa general assembly projects its power and influence into the future. From the very first day it operates as an efficient training school. Members speedily become versed and polished in the ways of public service. A newcomer to membership is usually more awed than curious in observing just how this representative segment of the government of our great American republic works; but he quickly learns to walk the tight rope of political rectitude with unflinching skill and success. There is abounding energy and undeveloped ability in the new accessions biennially to ranks of the Iowa law makers. This new blood poured into the state's official and political system exerts an influence and potency through future decades.

The many facets of our state government in action are a bit bewildering to even those who think they know their way around in public affairs. Occasionally newspaper writers criticise and even resent the independence and resourcefulness of legislators, who often have real need of parliamentary pitfalls ready to use for ill-considered emotional appeals from irresponsible quarters. The dignity and responsibility of a general assembly gives one an unfailing impression of authoritative action, although in recent years the intrusion of families of members, committee clerks and lobbyists upon the floors of Iowa houses when in session has greatly belittled the dignity of those bodies and definitely hindered legislative procedure.

The membership of any Iowa general assembly is ideally representative; but not all counties command the services of those most capable of rendering discriminating or understanding legislative service. Iowa has no great concentration of population where voters oftentimes are

less discerning in selecting officials. Even were there such, the Iowa constitution limits the number of members from any single county, thus distributing representation by securing members from every county. From all walks of life they bring varied experiences and knowledge of community needs. Any committee considering proposed legislation includes in its membership those who have some ability to judge of its value and expediency. More than any other official body in the state the legislative branch is authoritative, with responsibility and power to grapple with the recurring dilemmas of our social and economic life, and influence in a multitude of ways the welfare and activities of our people.

So valuable is the training and experience enjoyed by those serving in various sessions that the ranks of those ultimately attaining more exalted official stations are filled by men whose introduction to public life was through state legislative service. A surprising number of governors, state officers, supreme judges, congressmen, even cabinet members and other officials in high station received their elementary training in governmental affairs from the experiences gained through committee work and floor leadership in state assemblies. But these are the exception, rather than the rule, for adaptability, education and leadership contribute much to the development of those better suited for advancement. Notwithstanding this possibility of promotion, a large percentage of men who come to these positions of vantage do not set out to obtain them. Some first are county officials, school men, lawyers, editors, physicians, bankers, ministers, business men, salesmen, farmers or manufacturers, most of whom reluctantly devote the time required in protracted sessions at the state capital. Thousands of other men as well or better qualified will not consent to spare the time from their professions or business to attend the one hundred day biennial sessions. That is why, so often, we find too many well-intentioned, but inexperienced, fumbling men here and there in legislative

positions imposed upon by demanding elements that press selfish or ill-advised designs upon legislators, while actual needs of the state not so sponsored are neglected.

IDEALS HIGHER THAN ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The aims and purposes of legislators are as varied as those of individuals. In general they desire substantial improvement of conditions in the enactments sought. Yet, there are those who with deft skill obtain adoption of amendments to wholesome statutes, rendering them all but valueless for the purposes they were originally intended. Some sessions witness constant exhibitions of partisanship and subtle political maneuvering; while in other assemblies only personal rivalries seem involved, and once in a while speakers of the house are chosen without even party division.

The unfolding of individual experiences always broadens and develops, even mellows somewhat the attitude of the member who allows himself to become a real factor in the daily grind of work. Many who previously were quick to disagree, later often find it more easy to ponder and reflect, and act with greater candor and consideration than ever before possible, coming to understand that every question has two sides. From each of these recurring assemblies there go back to the home citizenship upwards of a hundred men who have developed in marked degree, more capable, more understanding and better fitted for service and leadership in the affairs of their communities, having become qualified for greater local responsibility or some higher official station when the call may come for recognition and advancement.

The power of the body itself is prolonged during the interim between sessions through appointment of investigating committees for future report, as well as a group of committee chairmen serving as a retrenchment and reform committee administering emergency appropriations. By reason of war restrictions necessary new build-

ings for housing of state departments and boards have not been provided for a number of years, resulting in vastly larger sums expended for rentals and maintenance.

Veteran legislators obtain acquaintance and influence in political circles, usually enjoying high standing in party councils and leadership in campaigns. There is respect for their judgment and acquiescence in their authoritative guidance. And in the fullness of time there is reverence for their accomplishments and their value to the state and nation.

As early as 1866, more than sixty years ago, when some who had served in the constitutional conventions, territorial and early state legislatures were still available, their organization was urged, in order to continue helpful interest in state affairs and secure contribution of their wisdom acquired through such experience. Thus, to this end, and in order that the state might benefit in maintaining its high standards of government, by each new generation receiving benefit of help and co-operation from those having previous experience and service, a large group of pioneer Iowa officials assembled in Des Moines. Among them were noted jurists, former congressmen, members of the constitutional conventions, state officers and legislators, with twenty years or more previous service; and they organized the Iowa Pioneer Lawmakers association, well known through the years since. So far as advised there is no other such state organization functioning anywhere, and certainly none has been in existence and enduring for such a long period of time.

PIONEER LAWMAKERS ORGANIZE

It was Sen. Norman Boardman of Clinton county from 1862 to 1866 in the Ninth and Tenth General Assemblies, who first proposed a reunion of the members of the Iowa constitutional conventions, territorial and early state legislatures. Conferring with Sen. John Scott of Nevada

and writing to former Lieut. Gov. Benj. F. Gue of Des Moines, September 26, 1885, Senator Boadman set in motion the plans for the new organization. The following January the first meeting was held, a formal call being issued. This was signed by those mentioned together with Judge Geo. G. Wright, former state senator from Van Buren county in the Second and Third General Assemblies, Judge P. M. Casady, senator from Polk county in the same assemblies, J. B. Grinnell, senator from Poweshiek county in the Sixth and Seventh, P. Gad Bryan, of Warren county, member of the Fourth and Fifth, C. F. Clarkson, of Grundy county, member of the Tenth and Eleventh, Charles Aldrich, clerk of the house in the Eighth, Ninth, Eleventh and Thirteenth, and a member of the Nineteenth, and others to the total of twenty-four.

The first session was held in Foster's opera house, but it has been the custom, since the state historical building was erected, to have a general session of the association in the great portrait gallery and another session with a joint meeting of the two houses of the current general assembly. The association proposed originally the erection of that building and followed to a conclusion the movement for its enlarged facilities. It has always been active in sponsoring much that has been accomplished in preservation of Iowa history and was responsible for initiation of the movements for celebration of both the territorial and state Centennial observances. A feature of meetings during recent decades has been the reception of oil portraits of Iowa notables presented to the state since placed on display in the portrait gallery. Appropriate ceremonies and addresses have marked these occasions.

The presidents elected by this association and those who presided at the biennial meetings have been as follows:

<i>Year of Meeting</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>County</i>	<i>Session First Served</i>
1886	Reuben Noble (Temp. Pres.)	Clayton	5th
1890	John F. Duncombe	Webster	8th
1892	Edward Johnstone	Lee	1st Ter.
	(Deceased prior to meeting, George G. Wright presiding)		
1894	George G. Wright	VanBuren-Polk	2nd
1896	George G. Wright	VanBuren-Polk	2nd
	(Deceased prior to meeting, John Scott presiding)		
1898	John Scott	Story	8th
1900	Hoyt Sherman	Polk	11th
	(Death of wife prevents att.) A. F. Hildreth presided)		
1902	Theodore S. Parvin	Linn	Ter. Lib.
	(Deceased prior to meeting, Samuel McNutt presiding)		
1904	Joseph R. Reed	Pottawattamie	11th
1906	James B. Weaver, Sr.	Davis-Jasper-Polk	Cong.
1907	T. B. Perry	Monroe	24th
1909	W. J. Moir	Hardin	9th
1911	Benj. F. Clayton	Pottawattamie	17th
1913	Chester C. Cole	Polk	Sup. Ct.
	(Out of state, Francis M. Epperson presiding)		
1915	Francis M. Epperson	Wapello	18th
	(Absent from meeting, Lot Abraham presiding)		
1917	Edward H. Gillette	Polk	Cong.
1919	Perry Engle	Jasper	23rd
1921	Perry Engle	Jasper	23rd
1925	Warren Garst	Carroll-Polk	25th
	(Deceased prior to meeting, Oley Nelson presiding)		
1927	A. B. Funk	Dickinson-Polk	22nd
1929	H. W. Byers	Shelby-Polk	25th
	(Deceased prior to meeting, George W. Clarke presiding)		
1931	George M. Titus	Muscatine	27th
1933	B. F. Carroll	Davis	26th
1935	John T. Clarkson	Monroe	33rd
1937	Emory H. English	Polk	29th
1939	John C. DeMar	Davis	31st

1949	H. J. Mantz	Audubon	39th
1951	Charles F. Clark (Carl W. Reed presiding)	Linn	38th
1953	Burton E. Sweet	Bremer	28th
1955	Arch W. McFarlane	Black Hawk	36th
1957	Frank Shane (Harold E. Davidson)	Wapello	31th

1941	H. S. VanAlstine.....	Pocahontas.....	37th
1943	Ray P. Scott.....	Marshall.....	38th
1947	Israel A. Smith.....	Decatur.....	34th

One of the first secretaries of the association was former Curator Charles Aldrich, who with Assistant Curator B. F. Gue, were prominent in its organization. Others serving as secretary were C. F. Wilson, B. F. Gue, Dan A. Poorman, Isaac Brandt, William H. Fleming, David C. Mott and Ora Williams.

During the years since the beginning succeeding governors of Iowa have addressed the association meetings and others eminent in public life of the state and nation have been heard in proceedings, the programs being replete with graphic recitals of early Iowa events and valuable historic data, reviews of legislative events, official traditions and important suggestions of needed enactments at current sessions of the general assemblies visited. Few organizations have maintained so virile an existence or worthwhile observance of duties imposed.

OBSTRUCTIONS AT THE DELTA

A report from the U. S. engineering department, states that the number of snags taken out of the mouths of this (the Mississippi) river during the year 1837, amounted to about 1,894. The engineer deems the expense of closing all the mouths but one, or making a ship canal, too expensive. Every snag pulled up by the steamer employed costs now \$13.00 the price advancing as the snags diminish. The peculiar obstructions could be avoided, if the caving banks were cleared of all timber, of which there have been felled this year 18,141 trees. The wash of the serpentine current causes the caving of the banks.

—*New Yorker*, April 21, 1838.

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